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SUBJECT: EMBASSY MANILA-SPONSORED JAZZ AND CLASSICAL CONCERTS  
DEMONSTRATE POWER OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

REF: STATE 0183414

¶1. SUMMARY: In a four-day period, Embassy Manila sponsored a classical piano concert at the Ambassador's residence and a series of three jazz concerts featuring Filipino and American artists. Each of the events targeted a different audience, ranging from top embassy contacts to the general public. The concerts demonstrated the power of cultural diplomacy to deliver a positive message about the openness and vitality of America to a wide variety of people. Embassy Manila created these particular events from scratch, but we look forward to the Department's cultural offerings in the coming fiscal year. END SUMMARY.

¶2. In the four-day period, November 16-19, 2006, Embassy Manila carried out an intensive program of cultural diplomacy, sponsoring a classical piano concert at the Ambassador's residence and a series of three jazz concerts at various venues in Manila. All four events celebrated "Philippine-American Friendship Year," a year-long package of activities that Embassy Manila is carrying out in cooperation with the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the National Historical Commission. Philippine-American Friendship Year began on July 4, 2006, which marked the 60th anniversary of Philippine-American Friendship Day, and will continue until July 4, 2007.

¶3. The first of the four events was a classical piano recital hosted by Ambassador Kenney at her residence on November 16. The evening featured two outstanding musicians, both of whom were targets of opportunity, in town for an international piano festival: Gila Goldstein, an American citizen who grew up in Israel, and Yuan Sheng, who was born in China and is now a permanent resident of the U.S. This line-up, combined with both artists' stories about their individual paths to artistic success and their strong attachment to the U.S., conveyed an eloquent message about the diverse, dynamic, and welcoming nature of U.S. society.

¶4. The audience at the intimate event consisted of 50 carefully-selected contacts of various Mission sections and agencies, with an emphasis on individuals who were younger and/or had not already been to the Residence on multiple occasions. In conversations with the guests during the buffet dinner that followed the concert, it was clear that they regarded the evening as a memorable occasion. Several of the guests emphasized how much they appreciated being at an Embassy-hosted event that (as they perceived it) had no overt connection to a U.S. policy goal. Significantly, the relaxed atmosphere created by the "softness" of the event resulted in conversations between guests and Embassy officers that in many cases were remarkably candid and substantive, at or even beyond the level of what we achieve at harder-edged events focused on specific policy goals.

¶5. The following evening, November 17, the first of three Embassy-sponsored Philippine-American Jazz Festival concerts took place in a 450-seat auditorium in Makati, Manila's version of Lower Manhattan. The audience for the invitation-only event combined senior Embassy contacts with members of the Jazz Society of the

Philippines, our partner organization for the festival. The result was a packed house with a pre-concert reception that brought together jazz aficionados from a wide variety of fields including government, business, military, NGOs, academics, and culture, along with members of the Jazz Society.

¶6. As they worked the crowd, Embassy officers had a chance to interact with former President Fidel Ramos (whose wife, an accomplished jazz pianist, was one of the performers), a young up-and-coming Muslim woman who already holds an important position in the Department of Education, a documentary filmmaker who is the Philippines' leading expert on jazz, an under secretary from the Department of National Defense, the "Tony Bennett of the Philippines," the president of the American Studies Association, a well-known jazz guitarist who is also an executive with the country's leading land development company, the Department of Education's under secretary for Muslim Affairs, a shipping magnate, a university president, a supreme court justice, and a graduate student in jeans and sandals who kept saying, "Wow, I didn't know America did stuff like this!" - that brief list gives some sense of the richly eclectic nature of the crowd, many of whom would be reluctant to attend our more policy-oriented events. The guests clearly had a great time at the concert, and - although it would take exit polling to establish this as a fact - there was every indication that they left the hall with a more positive, upbeat view of America.

¶7. The other two Philippine-American Jazz Festival concerts, on November 18 and 19, were both open to the public. The November 18 concert, which took place in an outdoor performance space at a large upscale shopping mall, drew an affluent, appreciative audience of around 1,000. The November 19 concert, in a plaza along Manila's main bay-front boulevard, pulled a primarily working class crowd of several hundred enthusiastic music lovers. Journalists were present at each of three jazz festival concerts, interviewing musicians and Embassy officers involved in the project.

¶8. Together, these four events demonstrated the power of cultural diplomacy to deliver a positive message about the openness and vitality of America to a wide variety of people, many of whom cannot be reached with more policy-oriented programs. Embassy Manila created each of the four events from scratch: the U.S.-based artists who performed at the piano recital were targets of opportunity who happened to be visiting Manila, and the three-part Philippine-American Jazz Festival was funded with a PAS grant and featured - as a vivid embodiment of Philippine-American friendship - a combination of Filipino musicians and locally-based American artists (including an American Fulbright Senior Scholar who is both a musicologist and a jazz musician). This do-it-yourself approach worked well, but is obviously quite labor intensive. Having reminded ourselves once again how effective cultural programs are in advancing our agenda, we look forward with renewed interest to the Department's cultural offerings in the coming fiscal year.

Kenney